Acumatica
The Cloud ERP

Protecting Margins on Every Mile, Pipe, and Pour

A digest for civil contractors

Civil contracting builds the backbone of everyday life. Every commute across a bridge, every clean glass of water, and every reliable power connection traces back to a contractor who moved the earth, laid the line, or paved the road that made it possible. It is demanding work, spread across sprawling sites, mixed crews, and equipment fleets that must perform in any weather and under the watchful eye of public agencies.



OFS International | Acumatica Customer

This digest is written for the leaders driving that work: owners, CFOs, and operations leaders at heavy highway, site development, earthwork, utility, pipeline, power infrastructure, and heavy civil specialty firms. Inside, you will find practical insights on where the market is heading, the hurdles slowing teams down, and the technology connecting the back office, the front office, and the field on one intelligent platform.

Defining the Market Page 2

Key Market Trends Page 3

Industry Challenges Page 4

Steps for Transformation Page 5

> "Our experience with Acumatica has been great. The interface is quick and easy to learn, which has increased our throughput of standard business functions, such as AP and AR. The allocation function through job costing has enabled our business leaders to make more informed decisions."
>
> – Ryan Lamb, CEO, GCATS Telecom & Critical Power Services, an infrastructure company

Defining the Market

The civil contracting sector spans a wide range of heavy infrastructure disciplines, each with its own equipment intensity, bidding model, and regulatory burden. Your needs and path to success depend heavily on your specialization, your fleet, and the public- and private-sector clients you serve.



Heavy Highway and Transportation

Heavy highway contractors build and rehabilitate the roads, bridges, interchanges, and transit systems that keep communities moving, often under unit-price or DOT-funded contracts. Beyond paving and grading, these firms manage massive fleets, multi-year schedules, and strict prevailing-wage rules. A connected platform brings unit-based costing, equipment utilization tracking, and certified payroll reporting together, accessible from a phone or a dashboard.



Site Development and Earthwork

Site development and earthwork firms handle the grading, excavation, demolition, and underground utility work that precede vertical construction. They live and die by equipment productivity, fuel and maintenance costs, and haul logistics. Real-time equipment costing, production-unit tracking, and location-based material transfers help keep margins intact across every dirt-moving operation.



Utility and Underground Infrastructure

Underground utility contractors install and maintain the water, sewer, gas, and telecommunications systems beneath our communities, often within tight municipal right-of-way windows. Alongside field installation, digital work orders, instant photo capture for inspection sign-off, and project-based billing accelerate payment cycles on public contracts.



Heavy Civil and Specialty Infrastructure

Heavy civil and specialty firms take on dams, marine structures, rail, and large-scale public works, often as self-performing general contractors or specialty subcontractors. This work demands sophisticated job costing, multi-year revenue recognition, bonding and compliance tracking, and the ability to manage joint ventures across long-duration projects.

Industry Stats

$219B spent on public highway, water, and sewer construction in 2024.

U.S. Census Bureau

92% of construction firms report difficulty filling open positions.

AGC

$1.2T authorized by the IIJA for US transportation and infrastructure.

GFOA

Key Market Trends Driving Growth

- **How Public Investment and Equipment Intensity Drive Growth:** Civil contracting is benefiting from sustained public infrastructure investment alongside ongoing supply chain and labor uncertainty. Federal and state infrastructure funding has sharply increased demand for qualified heavy highway, utility, and site-development firms. This surge in publicly funded work has also attracted private equity interest in mid-market civil contractors, providing capital for fleet expansion and technology modernization. At the same time, material costs, equipment financing pressure, and a shrinking pool of heavy equipment operators continue to threaten margins and project timelines.
- **Market Expansion:** Projections indicate continued growth in publicly funded infrastructure and site-development work, driven by aging infrastructure replacement cycles, population growth in developing regions, and continued federal transportation funding. Savvy civil contractors are leveraging digital management tools with advanced resource planning, equipment and fleet management, and real-time project tracking to navigate both the rising volume and complexity of multi-year public works projects.
- **Specialization and Scale:** Civil contracting remains a mix of large self-performing heavy highway firms and smaller, regionally focused utility and site-development specialists. While larger firms benefit from consolidated equipment and fleet dashboards, multi-project WIP reporting, and advanced bonding and compliance hierarchies, smaller contractors differentiate by staying agile, prioritizing local municipal relationships, and using flexible estimation and unit-pricing modules designed for easy customization.
- **Talent and Equipment Constraints:** The skilled equipment-operator and heavy civil labor shortage is acute. Investing in workforce development, easy-to-learn mobile applications for field crews, and guided onboarding can spark adoption and attract a new generation of operators and project engineers. Equally critical is equipment: unit-based accounting, utilization tracking, and predictive maintenance scheduling help civil contractors extend fleet life and avoid costly downtime mid-project.

Civil Contracting Operational Hurdles

1. **Equipment & Fleet Intensity:** Civil contractors carry some of the heaviest equipment investments in construction. Fuel, maintenance, depreciation, and utilization must be tracked precisely across cost codes and projects, or margins erode silently. Without purpose-built equipment costing and unit-based accounting, firms are left estimating rather than managing their largest cost driver.

2. **Public-Sector Compliance Burden:** Civil contractors working on DOT, municipal, and federally funded projects must navigate certified payroll, prevailing-wage requirements, bonding, lien waivers, and DBE/MBE compliance reporting across every jurisdiction where they work. Manual compliance processes create audit risk, slow billing cycles, and consume project management bandwidth that should be focused on delivery.

3. **Workforce Shortages:** Retirement and growing infrastructure backlogs have made qualified equipment operators, grade foremen, and project engineers hard to find and harder to keep. Firms that rely on cumbersome back-office systems or paper-based field processes struggle to attract a new generation of operators who expect modern tools on the job.

4. **Material and Logistics Volatility:** Aggregate, asphalt, concrete, and pipe supply uncertainty can halt jobs and cut profits without warning. Civil contractors managing materials across multiple active sites need real-time allocation visibility, location-based transfers, and proactive vendor communication to keep projects on schedule.

5. **Disconnected Office and Field:** On long-duration infrastructure projects, delays between what happens in the field and what the office sees can allow cost overruns to compound for weeks before anyone can act. Firms relying on manual time sheets, spreadsheet job costing, and disconnected payroll systems are flying blind on their most critical projects.

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Tech Transformation in Civil Contracting

Civil contractors who embrace connected business systems are setting new benchmarks in project delivery, equipment utilization, and public-agency satisfaction. Modern platforms bring together job costing, field operations, equipment management, compliance, and AI-driven insights in a single system, replacing the disconnected tools that create blind spots on complex, long-duration projects.

Unified, Real-Time Project Visibility

Access a comprehensive view of contracts, unit-price schedules, committed costs, and job progress across projects, crews, and equipment fleets, with configurable dashboards that give project executives and controllers the same live picture from any device.

Mobile-First Field Empowerment

Give equipment operators, foremen, and field managers mobile visibility that put schedules, daily production tracking, digital safety forms, photo capture, and compliance notifications in their hands, so data flows from the field to the office in real time rather than days later.

Billing, Payroll, and Compliance Automation

Purpose-built unit-price and progress billing, certified and prevailing-wage payroll, automated lien waiver tracking, and e-signature integration reduce cycle times and compliance risk on public contracts, without the manual overhead that strains project administration teams.

Equipment and Material Control

Track high-value fleet assets, automate maintenance scheduling, and manage material procurement and allocation across multiple active sites from a single system, giving operations managers the control they need to protect margins on equipment- and material-intensive projects.

AI-Driven Insights and Automation

AI anomaly detection flags unexpected spikes in fuel, labor, or material costs against unit-price estimates before they affect profitability. Cost-at-completion forecasting gives project executives early warning on multi-year infrastructure projects, while automated workflow routing and document classification reduce administrative burden across the project lifecycle.

Why Acumatica for Civil Contracting

Acumatica's unique cross-functional integration with manufacturing and distribution also gives civil contractors unmatched control over prefabrication, material procurement, and inventory management within the same system, which is a genuine competitive differentiator that no construction-only ERP can match.

Practical Steps for Sustainable Growth

Lasting growth comes from pairing deep industry expertise with technology that works across your entire business. A full lifecycle platform brings large infrastructure projects, smaller jobs, service work, and preventive maintenance into one intelligent system. Replacing aging, disconnected software with a modern, connected ERP solution gives you a real advantage in a competitive market, and it does so without adding complexity.

To lead and thrive in today's civil contracting industry:



- **Upgrade Your Core Systems:** Choose cloud platforms that unify project updates, financials, equipment costing, and compliance, with advanced integration options for client, vendor, and field applications. Streamlined data flows eliminate bottlenecks, while simple user management ensures the right people have access at the right time.
- **Develop and Retain Talent:** Empower your entire team with intuitive mobile apps, step-by-step guides, and customizable onboarding journeys. Foster engagement and growth by harnessing mentorship tracking and automated training records for equipment operators and field crews.
- **Sharpen Your Competitive Edge:** Lean on cross-industry capabilities to manage materials, equipment, and resources together. Track yard and warehouse inventory and coordinate prefabrication so the right resources are always ready.
- **Act on Real Insight:** Take advantage of interactive dashboards and embedded analytics that make it easy to forecast labor, equipment, or material shortages and track KPIs across every active project. Embedded AI, anomaly detection, and unit-rate cost forecasting then surface the risks, protecting margins and keeping change orders and billing cycles moving.

Choosing Acumatica means joining a community committed to advancing the civil contracting industry, equipping contractors of every size with reliable, customizable tools to grow, deliver on promises, and build the future of business, together.

Acumatica Cloud ERP is a comprehensive business management solution that was born in the cloud and built for more connected, collaborative ways of working. Designed explicitly to enable small and mid-market companies to thrive in today's digital economy, Acumatica's flexible solution, customer-friendly business practices, and industry-specific functionality help growing businesses adapt to fast-moving markets and take control of their future.

For more information on Acumatica,
visit www.acumatica.com or follow us on LinkedIn.

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